



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC)
Republican Leader, Committee on Education and Labor
Hearing on “Examining the Policies and Priorities of the U.S.
Department of Education”
April 10, 2019**

Thank you for yielding.

Thank you, Secretary DeVos, for being here today. Today’s hearing will provide Members of the Committee with a chance to hear about the Department’s priorities and what Department leadership is doing to provide greater opportunities to students at every level of education.

Committee Republicans are deeply committed to ensuring that all programs under the Department’s jurisdiction are implemented effectively and help grantees and stakeholders provide students a high-quality, effective education. This has been an ongoing effort that I know Secretary DeVos is an equal partner in. During the Obama administration, the Department handed down a slew of regulations and federal red tape that hampered programs. Since assuming office in 2017, Secretary DeVos has worked to reduce the regulatory burden on state and local leaders and has also worked to help provide flexibility where she can to help connect students with in-demand jobs.

Everyone here knows that we have a national skills gap problem. Currently, there are more than 7 million open jobs across the country, and the number of job vacancies keeps growing. These jobs are going unfilled because not enough workers have the necessary skills to fill them.

There’s a pervasive stigma around skills-based education, and my colleagues know it’s long been a priority of mine to end this misconception. A baccalaureate degree is not the only way to a good-paying job. There are a multitude of pathways to lifelong success, and we need to work to make skills-based education a viable and valuable path for people again.

So, I am eager to hear about the Department’s ongoing implementation of the *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*, this committee’s bipartisan legislation to reform career and technical education, which the President signed into law last July. The law will empower state and local leaders

to engage with employers and connect more Americans with on-the-job learning opportunities, like apprenticeships.

I'm also interested to hear about the Department's continued efforts to expand school choice for students, families, and teachers. Every student is different, and families should be empowered to choose the learning environment that best suits their child's strengths. Committee Republicans will always believe that a one-size-fits-all approach does more harm than good, and that's true most of all in education.

Students deserve an education that challenges them to reach higher and inspires them to be lifelong learners. Students deserve choices, and they have the best chance at lifelong success if they have access to expanded opportunities at every level of education.

Congressional oversight of the Executive branch is an important power of Congress. It's both necessary and appropriate to ensure that laws are properly implemented and taxpayer dollars are responsibly spent. It behooves us to be thorough and exacting in our review of the Department's activities and budget request. But make no mistake, "thorough and exacting" does not mean prejudiced and pernicious.

Secretary DeVos, you have been unwavering in your dedication to your job in the midst of strong headwinds. I want to assure you that Committee Republicans recognize the work you are doing to connect students with effective education. We're grateful for your efforts, and you can expect this side of the dais to ask questions that shed light on the progress the Department has made since you were confirmed as Secretary and your priorities moving forward.

Students of all ages and at every level of education should be empowered to pursue whatever education pathway will equip them with the unique skills they need to thrive in the workforce. I thank Secretary DeVos again for being here today, and I look forward to our discussion about how we can bring greater opportunities within reach for students across the country.

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